



Exploring the Representation of Islamic Ideals in the Contemporary Digital Narrative: An Analysis on literacycloud.org

Satria Dirgantara P. A.^{1✉}, Ramadhina Ulfa N.², Nissa Az-zahra M.³
State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya
✉ 03020321081@student.uinsby.ac.id

Abstract:

This research aims to examine the representation of Islamic teachings and values in contemporary digital narratives. The data of this research is taken from the website literacycloud.org. The selected short stories are part of the "Changemakers" theme, which is included in the website's reading list and features twelve different kinds of short stories. To analyze the intrinsic element in the short stories, the researchers employ qualitative research methods, including structured coding and thematic analysis, to interpret the subjective meaning of the selected data. The study uses the New Criticism theory, emphasizing close reading to uncover the unrevealed Islamic teachings and values expressed and communicated in the text data. This analysis demonstrates the significant presence of Islamic teachings and values in representing and promoting Islam within the digital narratives website. The discovery of an immersive Islamic frame or setting and alignment with Islamic values can convey Islamic ideals such as Tawheed, prophethood, the five pillars of Islam, and more. Thus, this research may foster a deeper understanding of Islamic nuances in literacy interconnected with readers' experiences related to Islamic spirituality in modern society.

Keywords: Islamic values; digital narrative; Islamic literacy; storytelling

INTRODUCTION

One of the largest religions in the world, Islam is founded on some guiding ideas, beliefs, and ideals. The cornerstone of Islamic practice is the five pillars of Islam: faith (*Shahada*), prayer (*Salat*), alms-giving (*Zakat*), fasting (*Sawm*), and pilgrimage (*Hajj*). Islamic principles strongly emphasize the oneness of God, obedience to His will, justice, compassion, humility, honesty, and social responsibility. These principles are crucial in determining how Muslims conduct their lives and how they view the world morally and culturally. They manage social interactions, family dynamics, business ethics, and personal behaviors. These values are significant because they affect Muslim decision-making, devotion to social justice, and pursuit of spiritual fulfillment. It is essential to know these values to appreciate the rich cultural and ethical tapestry of Islamic civilizations as well as the beliefs and behaviors of Muslims.



Modern civilization has seen a substantial increase in the popularity and importance of digital narratives, including interactive platforms, web series, social media storytelling, and online literature (Smith, 2020). The use of digital media has grown in popularity, offering an essential platform for the research and diffusion of cultural and religious concepts. Technology developments, enhanced internet connectivity, and audiences' transition to digital consuming habits are all factors that have contributed to the creation of digital narratives (Jones, 2018). These platforms allow authors and creators to interact with various viewers, cross geographical barriers, and convey intricate stories in novel ways. Digital narratives can potentially promote discourse about cultural and religious values and entertain and educate (Brown, 2019). Digital narratives can engage viewers and help them better understand cultural and religious beliefs in the digital domain through appealing storytelling techniques such as multimedia features, interaction, and user-generated content (Williams, 2017).

As they present the potential to engage a wide range of audiences and effectively convey Islam's basic ideas and teachings, digital narratives offer a potent medium for portraying and exploring Islamic values (Ahmed, 2019). Islamic principles can be accurately depicted and promoted using the inherent components of digital storytelling, such as language, symbolism, imagery, characterization, and plot development (Khalid, 2021). Islamic thoughts and teachings are best expressed through language, while symbolism and imagery can invoke more profound implications related to spirituality, morality, and religion (Hussain, 2018). Characterization permits the portrayal of individuals who uphold Islamic principles and resolve moral issues, while plot development facilitates the examination of ethical difficulties and their Islamic framework-based solutions (Rashid, 2020). Digital narratives might employ these components to engage viewers emotionally and intellectually, promoting a more profound comprehension of Islamic ideals and their relevance in modern society.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to advance knowledge of the connection between digital narratives and Islamic principles. This study offers valuable insights into practical storytelling approaches for promoting Islamic values in the digital sphere by examining the significance of intrinsic aspects in conveying and exploring these values within contemporary digital narratives.



LITERARY REVIEW

New Criticism is a significant literary theory that stresses attentive reading and the study of literary materials. The central tenet of New Criticism is the supremacy of the text and the assumption that meaning remains inside the work, regardless of authorial purpose or historical context (Brooks, 1947). Investigating inherent qualities like form, structure, language, and imagery, critical in transmitting meaning and creating emotional reactions, is central to New Criticism (Wimsatt, W. K. & Beardsley, 1946). The delicate interaction of these parts is closely examined, with the idea that the arrangement and artistry of the text have a substantial impact on its interpretation. New Criticism seeks to uncover deeper meanings, symbolic representations, and patterns within the text, illuminating the complex relationship between the author's artistic choices and the reader's experience (Abrams, 1993). New Criticism provides a practical framework for comprehending the multiple layers of meaning in literary works by emphasizing textual analysis and examining intrinsic aspects.

The application of the New Criticism theory fits in perfectly with the goals of this study, which is to investigate how inherent aspects are used to express and explore Islamic values in modern digital narratives. The New Criticism's focus on in-depth reading and study of intrinsic elements, including form, structure, language, and imagery, offers a valuable framework for analyzing and understanding the intricate layers of meaning in digital narratives (Brooks, 1947). By employing New Criticism, this research aims to thoroughly examine the inherent components of digital narratives, providing a greater comprehension of how these components influence the portrayal and investigation of Islamic values in the digital sphere. According to Wimsatt, W. K. & Beardsley (1946), an in-depth analysis of the textual elements and aesthetic choices in digital narratives through the lens of New Criticism can reveal the complex ways in which Islamic values are expressed and communicated and provide insight into the powerful storytelling strategies used to advance these values. The study's approach attempts to give a more comprehensive view of how digital narratives may genuinely reflect and explore Islamic ideals, contributing to current studies on the convergence of literature, religion, and digital media.



RESEARCH METHODS

This study used qualitative methods to analyze the intrinsic elements of short stories from a website. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) concluded that through structured coding and identifying themes or patterns, qualitative analysis is described as a research technique for the subjective interpretation of text data. The data source used in this study is an online short story with the thematic reading list "Changemakers" consisting of twelve story titles with reading difficulty levels five to six and published by the literary cloud website. This research data is taken from the intrinsic elements in the twelve titles from the online short story website. In this study, researchers want answers about the representation and values of Islamic religious teachings in contemporary digital narratives. In conducting research, there are several techniques to collect data used, such as: Sorting the list of reading themes on the web that have a connection with the representation and values of Islam, then reading repeated short stories from the reading themes that have been determined, and highlighting the text of the story and recording data such as intrinsic elements that may have the value of Islamic teachings needed to answer the research questions.

In analyzing the data of this study, researchers used three steps, including data selection, presenting and analyzing data using the New Criticism theory, and drawing conclusions. Miles & Huberman (1994) stated that data reduction, presentation, and conclusion are suitable for qualitative data analysis. In data reduction, researchers selected data used such as sentences spoken by characters, point of view, characterization, setting, plot, theme, and messages contained in the twelve online short story titles that had been selected. Then in presenting the data, researchers used the New Criticism theory in analyzing the data accompanied by descriptive data explanations related to research questions. The last step is that the researcher concludes after analyzing the selected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through the intrinsic elements of short stories that depict an immersive Islamic frame or setting and have alignment with Islamic values, readers can gain a profound experience and understanding of Islamic teachings and values. In twelve short story titles, intrinsic elements create a picture of Islamic life and wisdom. In this depiction, the main character and the people around the main character, character conversations, and story settings can invite us to obey religion and practice the teachings in every aspect of our lives. In addition,

through the existing intrinsic elements, readers will feel closer to the daily experiences of Muslims and provide many descriptions of the values of Islam that are held firmly. Islamic expressions reflect the message for us to do good so that the importance of Islamic spirituality does not fade.

Immersive Islamic Frame or Setting

The character's physical appearances, Islamic elements in the setting of places, and Islamic terminologies can represent Islamic landscape and nuance. Wearing hijab, sarong, and *peci* indicates Muslim identity. A mosque, Kaaba, and Quran reveal Islamic nuance. The Arabic language also means Islamic terminologies and prayers.

Of the twelve titles, there are ten out of twelve titles that have some immersive Islamic frame or setting. The titles are *A Friend for All* by Kristiani and Sadida, *Sharing Hope* by Widjati and Juwita, *The Big Dreamer* by Lestari Gf and Utami, *The River Warrior* by Widjati and Setiawan, *Luftan and Monsters* by Naomi and Rumi, *The Electronic Waste Hero* by Rhamdani and Arifin, *The Dream Weaver* by Naomi and Feelish, *The Village Illuminator* by Dewayani and Santoso, *The Strong Woman Is My Mother* by Kristiani And Matahari Indonesia, *The Magic Message* by Dewayani and Kusumah.

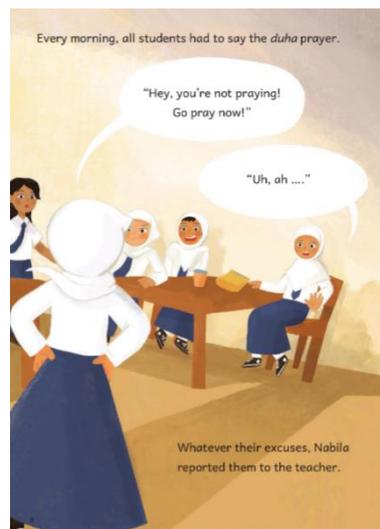


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows four female characters wearing their hijab to cover their *aurat*. Hijab represents Muslim identity. Some female characters in Figure 1 indicate they are Muslim students because they wear hijabs.



Figure 2

In Figure 2, a mother and a daughter wear hijabs. They represent obedient Muslim women because the daughter has worn a hijab since birth. The mother teaches her daughter to wear a hijab. Then when the daughter is an adult, she will become accustomed to wearing a hijab.



Figure 3

Figure 3 shows Muslims wearing sarongs and *peci* for men and hijab or headscarf for women.

When Prigi's parents came to pick him up,
Prigi felt embarrassed.



But his parents supported his actions.
"Keep on telling the truth, son," Prigi's father said.
"People who stand for the truth will always be winners."

15

Figure 4

Figure 4 illustrates that the father of a character named Prigi uses a *peci* as an item of a Muslim.

Nabila kept helping Dini with her homework.
She wanted Dini to get good grades.



Nabila also asked Dini to speak to the teachers.
Dini agreed and told them about her family's condition.



31

Figure 5

Figure 5 shows a student and a teacher wearing a hijab to cover their hair.



Figure 6

Figure 6 shows a character wearing a hijab while working because some people are not her *mahram* in her workplace.



Figure 7

Figure 7 illustrates a father and his daughter wearing a hijab since childhood as the formation of a *shalihah* person until they grow up.



Figure 8

Figure 8 represents us as Muslims, especially women, to keep wearing our hijab when attending important events because the hijab is an obligation for Muslim women.



Figure 9

Figure 9 depicts a Muslim mother wearing her hijab while out and about. Besides that, Mother's character says nothing happens unless it is *Allah's* will.

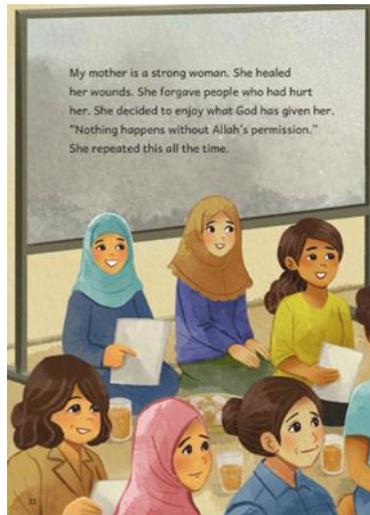


Figure 10

Figure 10 shows that a Muslim woman who obeys her religion will always wear her hijab, even when they gather with other mothers who do not wear hijabs.

Several Illustrations of How Fellow Human Beings Should Remind Each Other of Good Deeds

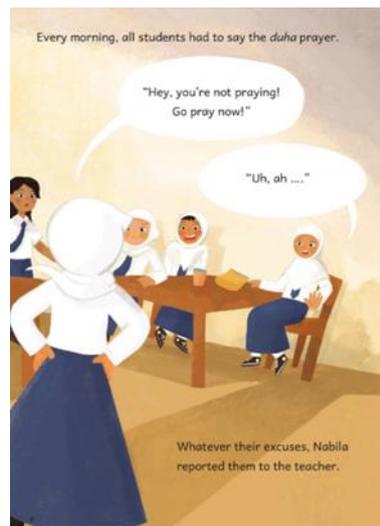


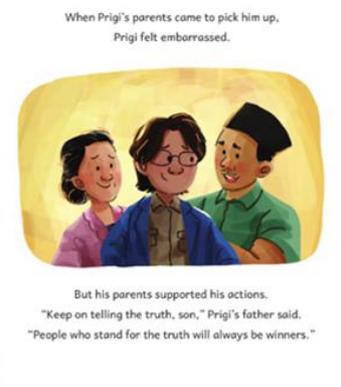
Figure 11

Figure 11 shows that a character reminds his friend to pray *duha* to remind fellow Muslims of goodness.



Figure 12

Figure 12 shows that the mother reminds her child not to give up on doing something good.



15

Figure 13

Figure 13 shows parents who support their children to fight for honesty without fear.

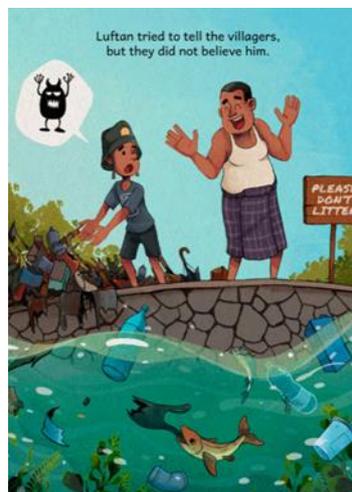


Figure 14

Figure 14 shows a child reprimanding a villager who littered the river.

Having and Maintaining Good Relationships with Fellow Humans (Family, Friends, and Others)



Figure 15

Figure 15 shows a child with a good relationship with his parents, namely his mother, by describing her problems.



Figure 16

Figure 16 shows a good relationship between two friends who help each other if they experience difficulties.

When Prigi's parents come to pick him up,
Prigi felt embarrassed.



But his parents supported his actions.
"Keep on telling the truth, son," Prigi's father said.
"People who stand for the truth will always be winners."

15

Figure 17

Figure 17 depicts a harmonious family with parents fully supporting children in goodness.



Mother never forbid Father to visit us.
For us, everything was still fine.

11

Figure 18

Figure 18 shows our obligation as Muslims to maintain the relationship even though the person has hurt our hearts.



Prigi's three daughters also loved
the environment very much.

Including Ninal

26

Figure 19

Figure 19 depicts the harmony of an Islamic family because they seem to be very happy and on good terms with each other.

Having Tolerance even though We Have Different Religions

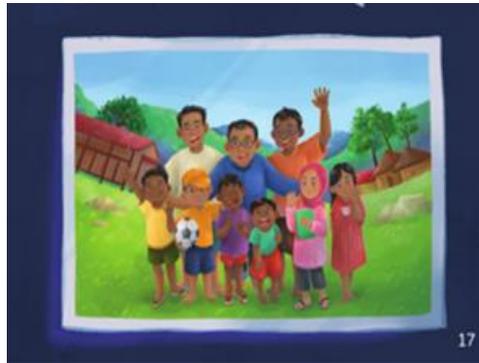


Figure 20

Figure 20 depicts religious tolerance because a female character wears a hijab, and the other female character does not, and they look happy living together.

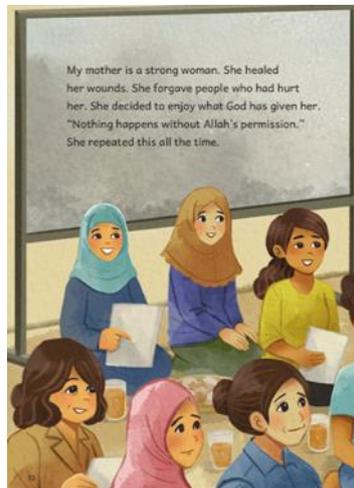


Figure 21

Figure 21 depicts tolerance through the existence of characters who wear hijab with characters who do not wear hijab, where they live side by side and are happy with each other in the association.

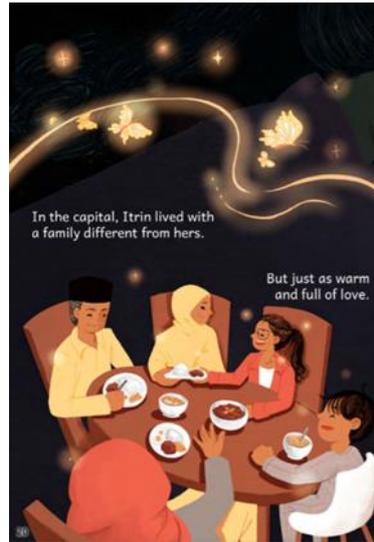


Figure 22

Figure 22 shows tolerance of family life; one of them is a college student from outside the island who has a different religion.

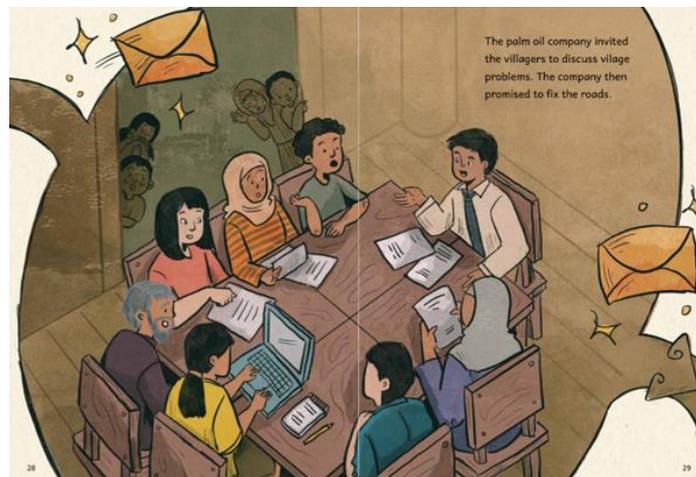


Figure 23

Figure 23 depicts the portrayal of tolerance through life together in the community where they have different religions but can gather together and be united in facing everything.

From the data in the images above, the immersive Islamic frame and background can be seen by depicting female characters wearing hijabs as Muslim women who obey religion and male characters with *pecis* and sarongs. Then there are many illustrations of how fellow humans should remind each other of goodness, giving the image that *Muslims* are required to have and maintain good relations with fellow humans (family, friends, and other people) and have tolerance even though we are of different religions.

Alignment with Islamic Values

On the other hand, we can align it with the value of Islamic religious teachings from the twelve short story titles. (additional two titles that have not been mentioned in the previous section are: *Yuyun's magical bubble* by Lestari Gf and Primadani and *Butet's biggest adventure* by Rhamdani and Stevanie).

Excellent and Appropriate Dress Code in the Islamic Religion.



Figure 24

Figure 24 references a good and correct way of dressing in Islam, where it is forbidden for all students to wear tight clothes. Coupled with the prohibition of excessive makeup for women and also the prohibition of wearing bracelets for men.



Figure 25

Figure 25 illustrates a woman in dressing, starting from the character wearing a hijab, clothes that are not tight, and long pants up to the ankles.

Have Leadership Qualities, Never Give Up Like The Prophet and The Caliphs, and Strive to Achieve What We Want



Figure 26

The nature of continuing to struggle and never giving up for the sake of the goal to be achieved can be seen in the picture above, where the main character immediately invites the inn manager to know the river polluted by his waste.



Figure 27

The leadership and unyielding nature possessed by the main character in the picture above, where she wants to bring about change by creating an organization and being one of its pioneers.

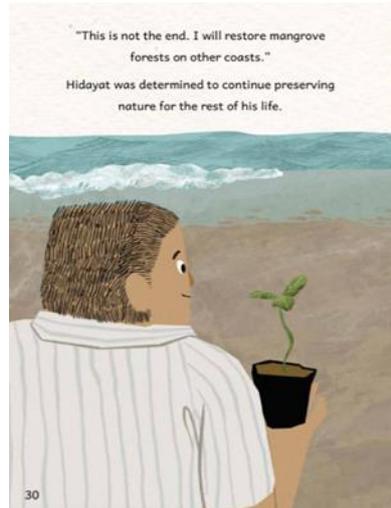


Figure 28

The main character in the picture above has an unyielding nature and a strong desire to realize his wishes. Where the villagers rejected him because many disagreed with the planting of mangrove trees on the beach, which was considered detrimental to fishermen, then the main character explained that in addition to preventing abrasion, the existence of mangrove trees would make it easier for us to get income such as the presence of fish under the mangrove tree.



Figure 29

The main character in the picture above has leadership qualities and continues to fight for what he wants. He became the leader of a demonstration to voice the voice of the surrounding community that the surrounding river water was polluted due to the factory's waste until the police arrested him.

But, the teachers refused to use her approach.
The school's disciplinary rules were clear. Whoever disobeyed the rules would be punished. The school never asked the reasons for students' disobedience.

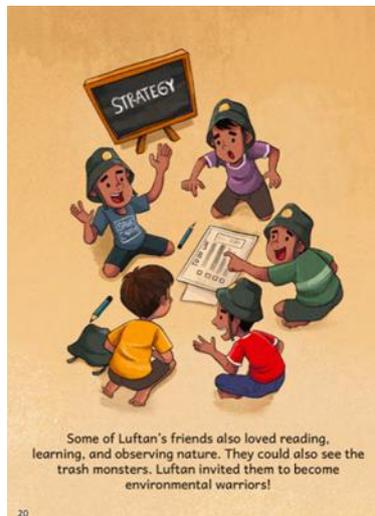


Nabila felt disappointed, but she didn't lose hope.
She continued seeking solutions.

17

Figure 30

In the picture above, the main character has an unyielding nature and continues to fight for his wishes. In Figure 30, the main character wants to negotiate punishment in school for children who break the rules, but the teachers refuse. However, she did not give up and continued to look for a fair solution for the children who broke the rules.



Some of Luftan's friends also loved reading,
learning, and observing nature. They could also see the
trash monsters. Luftan invited them to become
environmental warriors!

20

Figure 31

The main character in the picture above has leadership qualities and is also unyielding to achieve his desires. He had previously tried telling the locals not to throw garbage in the river, but no one paid attention. Then, he learned from various books with friends his age, made an association, discussed strategies to eradicate this problem, and became the association's leader.

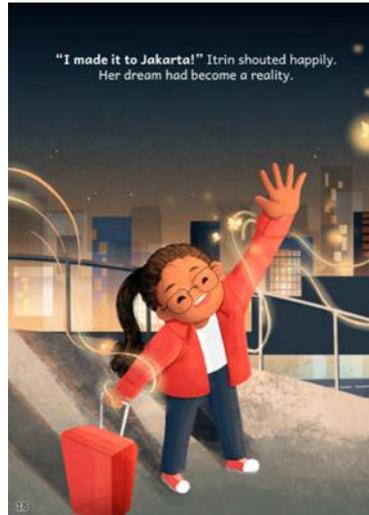


Figure 32

The main character in the picture above has an unyielding nature and a strong desire. She continued to strive to achieve her goals by studying seriously until she was accepted at one of the universities in Jakarta and completed her education there. Besides that, she believes, "If my friend can, then I can too because nothing is impossible."

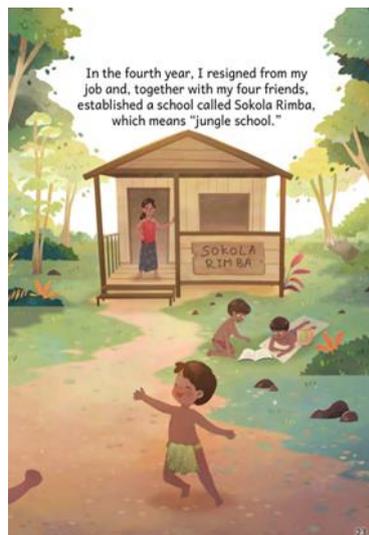


Figure 33

The character above has an unyielding nature that is accompanied by leadership traits. She went through many obstacles, such as being away from home while studying. Then, after she graduated from higher education, she wanted to help the inland people with her knowledge, but instead, she was considered one of the people who did illegal logging. However, in the end, she managed to melt the hearts of the inland people and became one of the pioneers of school construction there.



Figure 34

The mother character in the picture above is portrayed as someone who never gives up and has leadership qualities. Although she previously experienced problems in her household, she continued to rise, and in the end, she made an association to help mothers in East Nusa Tenggara manage finances.



Figure 35

In Figure 35, the main character has an unyielding nature and leadership to bring change. As a child, she wanted to give a remote village electricity but could not do much then. Then, after marriage, she continued to study and later built a hydroelectric power plant to provide the village with electricity. While speaking at an event, she told the new graduates to love and bring change to their village.

As Muslims, we are obliged to thank Allah for creating a beautiful natural world that we can fully enjoy, and we are obliged to protect it

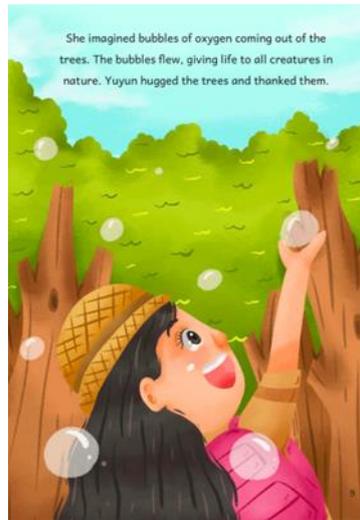


Figure 36

In the picture above, the main character feels grateful for nature's beauty and how she can breathe for free through the trees around her. She said that she would do everything to protect nature.

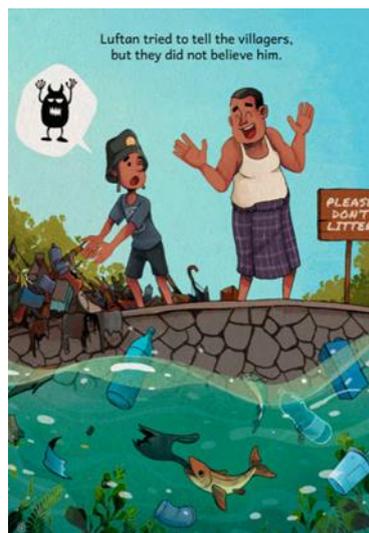


Figure 37

The main character above reflects a sense of love for nature created by *Allah*. He is trying to protect the river from the garbage the community throws and warns everyone who throws garbage in the river.

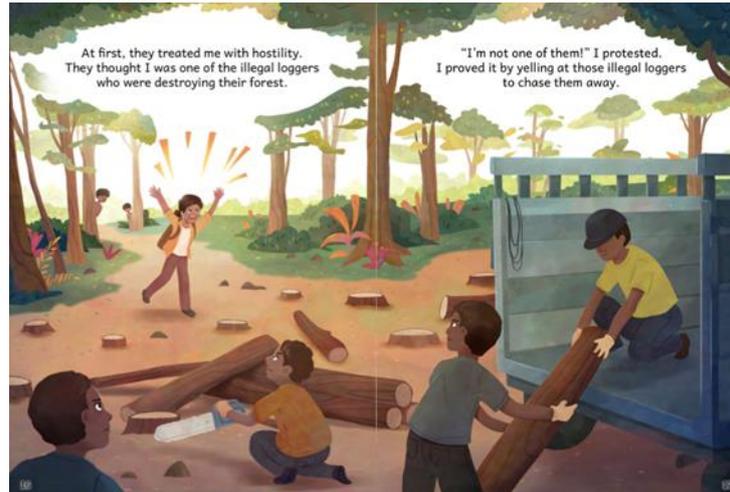


Figure 38

In the picture above, the main character has a sense of gratitude and love for nature given by *Allah* when she tries to stop and expel illegal loggers from destroying the forest where many living things live.

We must help others or compete in goodness (Fastabiqul Khairat), share with people who need help, both physically (books or goods) and non-physically (the knowledge we have), and we must be helpful to other people as Muslims (Khoirunnasi anfauhum linnas)



Papa and Mama had taught me that no amount of help was too small. Every helping hand counts.



Even in a tough place like Pelaihari, South Borneo.

5

Figure 39

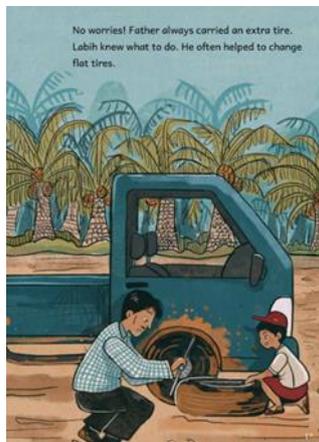
The picture above is of the main character as a child, where he was given a message from his parents that sharing is no matter how big or expensive the items we will provide to people in need.



Puri taught Rustom to apply the shampoo by himself. Her dad had said it's important to help people to help themselves.

Figure 40

In the picture above, the main character remembers his father's message that helping each other is essential.



No worries! Father always carried an extra tire. Lebih knew what to do. He often helped to change flat tires.

Figure 41

The picture above shows a character named Lebih, who greatly enjoys helping. He always carries an extra tire just in case people have problems with their vehicle tires.

I chose the electronic waste issue for my research topic in school. That research made me realize that electronic waste is toxic and very dangerous for our environment.



Figure 42

The main character in the picture above shows that he wants to be beneficial to other humans. He raises the issue of e-waste in his research and thinks that e-waste is a hazardous poison for the environment if left unchecked.



She wrote the babies' weights on the charts. She also comforted them so that they didn't cry when weighed.



Early this morning, she even helped Mom cook mung bean porridge for the guests.

Figure 43

The child, the main character in the picture, has a highly helping nature; she usually helps her mother cook early in the morning and assists mothers in her neighborhood when there are health checks on their children.

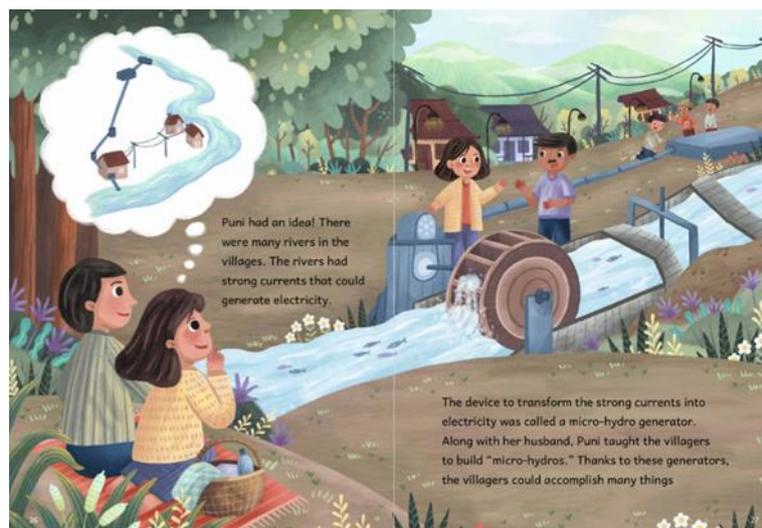


Figure 44

In the picture above, the main character shows that she is helpful to the society around her. She and her husband built a small hydroelectric power plant to generate electricity that would be useful for the people in the village.



Figure 45

Figure 45 depicts a main character who has returned after higher education. Through her dreams, she wants to benefit her environment by often sharing things such as books and school supplies. In addition, she also likes to share her knowledge with children.

Love Our Parents because They Would Do Anything for Their Children

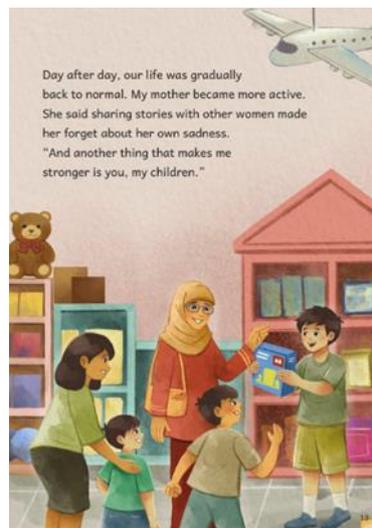


Figure 46

Figure 46 shows that parents will do anything and try desperately for their children. Therefore, they love their parents while they are still there.

Respect Differences because No Creature Created by Allah Is Born Perfect

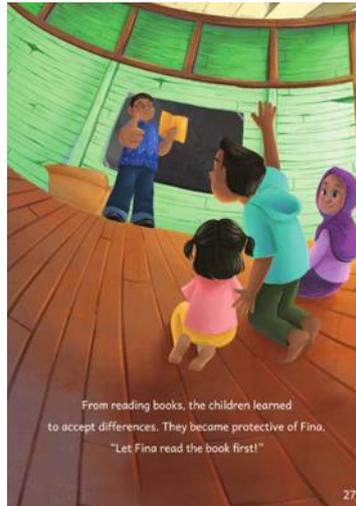


Figure 47

The picture above shows tolerance to fellow humans who have deficiencies. The child in the picture has no hands, and his friends show their tolerance by holding the book and telling the child to read first.



Figure 48

From Figure 48, we should be able to take a lesson that, fellow creatures of Allah, we should not insult each other because Allah created no human being perfect. We must coexist and put aside skin color, ethnicity, or religious differences to make life peaceful.



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Islamic messages

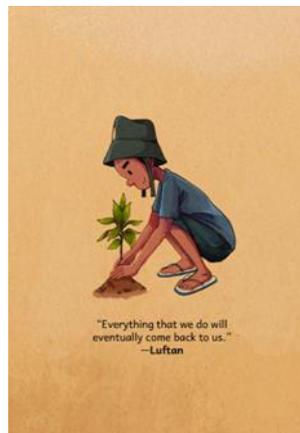


Figure 49

From the picture above, it can be seen that the motivational message of the character is following the message or teachings of Islam. In Islam, it is mentioned that "What we reap is what we will harvest."



Figure 50

The motivational message from the picture above can be equated with the message or value in Islam, "Do not postpone a job when you can do it now."

From the data in the form of pictures above, we can align with the values in *Islam*, such as how to dress adequately and appropriately in *Islam*, have a leadership spirit and never give up like the Prophet and the caliphs, continue to strive to achieve what we want, we are obliged to be grateful to *Allah* who has created a beautiful nature that we can fully enjoy. We are obliged to protect it. We must help others or compete in goodness (*Fastabiqul Khairat*), share with people who need help (both physically (books or goods) and non-



physically (the knowledge we have)), must be helpful to others as *Muslims* (*Khoirunnasi anfauhum linnas*), Love our parents because they will do anything for their children, respect differences because no creature of *Allah* is born perfect. There are Islamic messages in this online short story.

Based on the identification results through the intrinsic elements in the twelve short story titles, the researcher concludes that two points represent and explore Islamic themes and values, including the immersive Islamic frame or setting and alignment with Islamic values.

Through the identification of these intrinsic elements, the depiction of an immersive Islamic frame or setting, as well as the alignment with Islamic values in short stories, can provide more understanding of our lives as Muslims and apply Islamic values to our lives, as well as their influence in shaping human thoughts, actions, and relationships with Allah and fellow creatures that Allah created. Thus, online or digital short stories can effectively deliver important Islamic messages and values and build a broader understanding of Islam.

CONCLUSION

Through the extensive analyses conducted by the researchers, two main key points were identified: an immersive Islamic frame or setting and alignment with Islamic values. The results obtained from the analysis, which focused on intrinsic elements present in the narratives, represent and demonstrate the teachings of Islam in digital narrative websites. The details of the immersive Islamic frame or setting that emerged in the data were observed through the clothing worn by the characters. Furthermore, the Islamic nuance emphasizes the importance of establishing good relationships among characters regarding friendship and family, including respect, appreciation, and tolerance toward others. Additionally, the alignment with Islamic values is strongly evident in the data. This is evident in various stories, such as how characters wear Muslim clothing that adheres to the Islamic law of covering the *aurat*. Moreover, leadership skills, such as perseverance and a strong desire, like the Prophet and the caliphs, are portrayed. Islamic values also surface in the narratives as stimuli and inspiration to express gratitude towards God, help those in need, love and respect parents, appreciate others, and convey motivational Islamic messages.



With this identification, the researchers conclude that literarycloud.org can effectively convey Islamic teachings and values. The readings on this platform can influence readers' thoughts and actions in their relationship with Allah and fellow human beings. As a result, a digital narrative website plays a crucial role in representing and promoting Islam, fostering a better understanding of the religion and its values. Through this digital narratives website, it can facilitate Muslims in applying Islamic teachings in modern society. Also, this research can be beneficial for future research in enhancing the comprehension of Islamic ideals and their relevance by providing valuable insights into effective storytelling techniques for promoting Islam through contemporary digital narratives in the modern era.

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